



COMPILED BY THE LATE FRANKSON.

MRS IAN FRANKSON.

IX

A PROLOGUE AND EPILOGUE

A DEATH IN

THE W.

Characters:

IRMA SPENCER.
EDWARD SPENCER.
ISABEL SPENCER.
JACK SPENCER.
HAROLD DENNISON.
RICHARD DENNISON.
IRVING MONTROSE.
MRS GOODRIDGE.
PETER, BUTLER.
THERESA, MAID.

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PROLOGUE.

Garden outside Spencer's countryhome.

As Curtain rises two children are seen swinging on a garden-swing. Isabel, age five, is swinging her brother, age three.

Isa. What a treat it is that Susan has a headache. If she were here now we could swing half as high.

Jack. If her headache would only last a little while, we could have all sorts of sport.

Isa. Oh, don't say that, Jack; it is awful to have a headache. I had one once, but I never want to have another again.

Jack. Well, I don't really want her to suffer; but isn't it fun to have such nice, high swings?

They laugh. Enter Richard.

Rich. Good gracious! Those children will succeed in breaking their necks, if they are not stopped. Runs over and stops swing. Where is your nurse, little ones?

Jack. She is not here, and we are not sorry.

Isa. Oh Jack, how rude.

Rich. takes Isabel in his arms: Do you know, little one, that if I had not come here just now you might have been hurt very badly? Tell me, dear, what is your name? I know your last name but I do not know your christian name.

Isa. My name is Isabel, and my little brother's name is Jack.

Jack. You forgot to tell him my middle name; but I'll tell him that my full name is Jack Harold Spencer.

Rich: aside, They named the boy after my brother; loud, You have a very pretty name, my boy, and I hope that you will be as good a man as your namesake.

Isa. Do you know Dr Dennison?

Rich. Yes, I know him. Is he in the house just now?

Jack. Yes, oh yes; he is playing checkers with father. Shall I tell him you are here?

Rich. Yes, tell him I want to see him alone, Isabel, I think you better take the message, Jack is likely to forget before he

gets into the house.

Jack. Oh no, I won't forget.

Isa. I will go with him and see that he carries the message right
Rich. kisses both children. They run upstairs.

Rich. How it breaks my heart to hear how people worship him, and now, in the midst of his glory, he is running away like a thief, who fears constant capture. Well, I have come here to find out the cause, and I will not leave until I know it.

Harold. coming down the stairs, Well, well, how came you here, and why did you send for me to come out to see you. Why, the Spencer's would be glad, so glad to have you call.

Rich. You know, Harold, I never make a practise of visiting rich folks; first, because I do not care to be looked upon as their poor friend, and second, my education is limited. I did not have the chance in life that you had. Our father lived long enough to be able to send you to college, then, when he died I went to work that you might finish your education and become a physician.

Har. Why, Richard, you surprise me; you never spoke like that to me before; besides, you know I was willing to give up my studies and work hand in hand with you; but you begged, you implored that I go back to college. You vowed it would be a pleasure for you to work. I was not cut out to be a gentleman, you said, and our dear mother so longs to see at least one of us a man.

Rich. That is what I wanted to hear you say. Our mother longed to see you what you are today, and today when you have brought her to the very height of her ambition, you intend to run away, and leave her in her old age. Harold looks surprised. Ah, you see I know your secret; but, Harold, I have come ~~here to put you on the right path again. I have never spoken a word~~ here to put you on the right path again. You know I have never spoken a loud ^{word} to you in my life. How could I, when

you have taken the place of our father. Harold, if you could but understand the blow you will inflict upon her dear old head, you would rather die a thousand deaths than take the step you contemplate. You do not know how proud she is of you. It is her delight, when the bell rings, to go to the door and hear the patients ask, "Is the doctor in?" She then answers in her sweet, soft voice, "I will send my son to you at once." Don't you see, you can not, must not, go away!

Har. Do you think, Richard, that I have not given one thought to all this that you say? Did I not dread a scene I would not run away, but would tell you I am going. Have I committed a crime that I must run away?

Rich. Then tell me; why did you think of leaving us like that?

Har. Richard, I will no longer deny that I am going away, and no power on earth can keep me here; but I can not tell you why.

Rich. You can't tell me why, and you will go? Oh no, no, you can't mean that. You are simply joking. You saw how serious I am, and never having seen me in that mood before you are trying to keep this up. Come, tell me you are joking, for, really, I can't stand a joke like that, it takes my breath away.

Har. shakes his head. It is no joke, Richard, it is the truth. I am going away tonight; I just came here to say good-bye to the Spencer's.

Rich. How dare you stand there and tell me you are going away, and leave our mother, our dear old mother to break her heart for you. You know this will kill her.

Har. Don't say that, I beg of you; don't say that. Do not make my burden any heavier than it is now. Believe me, Richard, it is more than heavy now. I must go away. I must, or I would not go; but I will not forget you both. I will send you money all the money that you may need and more; and here, he takes out a package and hands it to Richard, this will keep you till you hear from me.

Rich. throws package at his feet, I don't want your money. Do you think you can buy us with that? No, we do not want it; I can

work, and work I shall day and night, to support our mother and myself. Don't dare send us a dollar, for it will be returned to you.

Har. For God's sake don't drive me mad. I can't go away and leave you penniless.

Rich. I do not compell you to go.

Har. No, but you compell me to tell you a secret, that I would have told no one to my dying day. If I tell you why I must go away will you promise me to be more lenient?

Rich. Perhaps.

Har. I will tell you. I know you will be the last to speak, and say Harold, I pity you. Before I go any further I must remind you of Helen, he bows his head, the girl you loved so well. I would not awaken old memories, but I must. I know you loved her, for when she died I saved you from your hands, for you wished to end your life, that you might meet her in Heaven. Richard, I too loved a girl as madly as you loved Helen. I lost her too, but not as you lost Helen. The girl I loved married another man; it was her father's wish, and besides she did not know I loved her. I did not think she would marry so soon, and she married my best friend, the truest and best of men on earth. I tried hard to fight against that impossible love, I called myself the most wicked of men, but all in vain I could not forget. As years passed by my love for her grew greater and greater, and I knew my sin was unpardonable; but I could not help it. It has grown on me so, that I sometimes feel I could kill her husband to set her free. My life is a continual torture; I hear her husband speak to her all the endearing words I might have called her, if she were mine.

Rich. I can bear it no longer. Do you understand now why I must go? he hangs his head. Yes, I understand, Harold, and though it breaks my heart, I must say to you: Go! Brother, now that you have told me so much will you not tell me her name?

Harold points to the house.

Rich.

Rich. My God. He drops his head, then goes over to Harold and holds out his hand. Forgive me, Harold, if I have caused you pain; I did not know.

Har. Go home now; I will follow you soon. I must say goodbye to her.

Rich. Poor boy! Be brave. When you leave her say to yourself that you lost her as lost Helen. He leaves.

Har. Say goodbye to her! Well I have rehearsed it so often, I ought to be able to accomplish it now.

Spencer. comes down the stairs: I was just beginning to get anxious about you.

Har. My brother was here, he had something of importance to say to me.

Irma appears; stands on top of stairs, unnoticed by them.

Spenc. Why not have asked him into the house?

Har. He did not wish to go; Irma comes down slowly; for he came to give me a lecture.

Irma. You do need a lecture once in a while, especially when you spoil my children so.

Har. goes over to her: But it will be unnecessary for any lectures in the future, my dear Irma.

Irma. Oh, going to be more sensible?

Har. You are quite right. I am going to be more sensible; I am going away.

Irma stands as if paralyzed.

Spenc. You are going away?

Irma is trying to find something for support while her husband is talking to Harold.

Spenc. I think he is in love; don't you, Irma?

Irma. I - I don't know what to think, he has surprised me so.

Spenc. He is going to where the girl of his heart is waiting for him. I am sure I have guessed it.

Har. No, you have not guessed it. I am not going to her, I am fleeing from her.

Irma. And may I ask why you are fleeing from her, Harold?

Har. Because- because she is already a wife and a mother; but do not judge me too harshly. I have loved ^{her} since long before she married, but my love was not returned. I thought I would become reconciled to my fate, but alas, the longer I live the harder becomes my burden. I must go away where I will not see her, where I will not hear her voice; perhaps it will not be so hard then.

Spenc. Harold, you have my sincere sympathy. It must be very hard to face a disappointed love. He looks over at Irma. What is the matter, Irma, are you ill?

Irma. Yes, I am not well, a sudden dizziness has come over me. I - I want to go in, but I can't see very well, I am so dizzy.

Spenc. takes Irma in his arms, Harold will excuse you, dear. He turns to Harold: You know, this is one of those weak spells she is subject to, and they come so often.

Har. goes over to them. Can I do anything for you before I leave?

Irma. shakes her head, No, nothing. I am sorry to leave you like this. If you must go, let me say good- goodbye to you; and I hope you will try to - to forget, if that is possible.

Spenc. I will see you before you leave.

Spencer assists Irma up the stairs. When they reach the last step she turns and looks at Harold.

Irma. Good bye.

Har. Good bye. They go in.

Har. goes over to children's swing. How she pities me; if she only knew.

He throws his arm against support of swing, and drops his head on arm.

Curtain.

ACT 2.

Fifteen years later.

Iraa's room in Spencer's house.Iraa is resting on couch. Isabel is reading to her.

Isab. reads: I have not received a letter from your mother for a whole week, but I will hope she is not very ill. I would have remained here for another week, but the thought of your mother being ill forbids that. I may be with you in time to read this letter. Hoping to be agreeably surprised and find her well to stand a lecture, I am as ever, Your devoted father.

Isab. Now, mother, confess, it was wrong not to write a whole week.

Iraa. I do confess it was wrong; but, really, time passed so rapidly I did not think a whole week had gone by; besides, you have kept on writing.

Isab. Yes, but you know, when you do not write father believes you too ill to hold the pen.

Enter servant with card.

Iraa. reads: Mrs Goodrich. To servant: Show the lady in, Peter. He leaves.

Iraa. I am glad she came, it will help break the monotony for at least a little while. She goes over to mirror and looks in. She is sure to tell me I look charming this morning, and I want to see how far from right she is.

Isab. I hope she will be altogether right, for Irving tells me I resemble you so much. She laughs.

Iraa. I am sorry to disappoint you, dear; but if she says I look charming this morning, you had better send her the address of your new optician. There will be a chance for him.

Enter Mrs Goodrich, puffing, as if overcome by heat.

Mrs G. Whew, how very warm you do manage to keep this place. Goes over to Iraa. Good morning, dear. Good morning, Isabel. But this room is warm.

Isa. Let me help you remove some of those heavy wraps, perhaps you will then feel more comfortable.

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Mrs G. Do, dear.

Isab. assists her in removing wraps. There, I hope you feel better now.

Mrs G. smiles. Thank you; yes, I do feel better already. Why, Mrs Spencer, you do look charming this morning.

Isabel smiles.

Iraa. I can't help that.

Mrs G. Of course you can't. I see you don't appreciate your good looks, but that is the way of the world. What makes one laugh, makes the other cry; what makes one glad makes the other sigh. Oh, yes, I have often sighed for the want of good looks; perhaps, if I had the pretty face you care so little about I might have succeeded in making such a fool of my husband as most pretty women do. You know, a bright man says no, and means no, except when he is looking at a pretty face. There, there, Isabel, don't look at me so reproachfully; don't mind me, dear. I very often say mean things just to please a sudden fancy. Come here dear, I am going to tell you something real nice, that is, something that will interest you. Isabel goes over to her. Have you seen anything of the Fenton's lately?

Isab. No, not for a week or so.

Mrs G. Isn't that lovely; then I will be the first to break the news.

Isab. What news! I am really anxious.

Mrs G. I knew you would be. It was like a thunderbolt to me. I never suspected it, and had I heard it from anyone but the Stapleton's, their own cousins, you know, I would still be in doubt. They usually know what is going on at the Fenton's. You know they are the poor relatives, a perfect nuisance to the Fenton's, but really useful to outsiders; and it was from them I heard the news.

Iraa laughs unnoticed by Mrs G.

Isab. But you have not told us.

Mrs G. That is what I am coming to. It serves him right, though, in

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a way. A man has no business to show a girl four fourths of his love. Three fourths is enough; let him keep the fourth for a rainy day.

Isab. You don't mean Clarabel has broken her engagement?

Mrs G. You have just guessed it. She has broken the engagement, and he is breaking his heart. And why not? It is only natural. Clarabel is worth half a million; why, it is enough to drive a man to drink. Poor fellow! If he only had not paid her so much attention, she might have considered the matter a little more seriously.

Irma. You are quite right, Mrs Goodrich.

Mrs G. You should be the last person to say that, for when I see your husband I shall tell him to ^{spend} less of his precious time in idolizing you and more time in bringing you to your senses. They laugh. Now, I must be going, I am in a hurry. I just dropped in for a few moments as I heard you were not well. But now that I find you looking better than ever I will hurry off. I must go the Fenton's; I am dying to know the whole truth of the affair. Maybe it was he that broke the engagement; but, no, that is hardly possible, not when half a million goes with it. I must go there at least to show them I am interested. Give me my wraps, Isabel.

Isabel helps her with wraps. Mrs G. goes to looking glass.

Mrs G. Dear me, but this bonnet does make me look ten years older, and that girl told me it was almost youthful looking. Well, she will get back in the morning. Now, I must say goodbye.

She kisses Irma, then turns to Isabel: You won't be foolish enough and throw Irving over, will you?

Isab. No, indeed.

Mrs G. You are a clever girl. When you caught Mr Right, you hold on tight. They laugh. Now, goodbye dear, take good care of your mother till your father returns; he will hold you responsible you know. She goes to door, then turns and looks at Irma. And as for you, it is high time you stop that nonsense of

being ill. Really, I think you must be glad to have me come in almost daily to inquire about your health.

Irma. I am always glad to see you.

Mrs G. Thank you; I am really going. Good bye. She leaves.

Isab. She is a dear good soul, isn't she, mother. Just a little inquisitive.

Irma. Yes, but we are all that; a little more or less, only some have more tact than others, and manage to hide a little of it.

Isab. Can you tell me, mother, why we women are acknowledged busy-bodies, when it is a fact that men are sometimes more anxious to hear of things than we are?

Irma. Well, my dear, the only answer I can give you is that though we have the name, men play the game.

They laugh. Enter Mr Spencer, unnoticed by Irma.

Isab. Oh, stand just where you are, mother; don't turn around, and try to guess who just entered the room.

Irma. How can I guess, is it Clarabel?

Isab. No, guess again.

Irma. Jack?

Isab. Oh, no, can't you guess better than that?

Irma. Perhaps it is your father?

Isab. Turn around and see for yourself. Irma turns around.

Spenc. Irma, I am so glad to see you well.

Irma. You did ~~surprise~~ surprise me; I did not expect you so soon. How brown you look.

Spenc. How much better you look? I should like to scold you, but I guess I will wait awhile.

Isab. Suppose you give me a chance, mother;

Spencer releases Irma; Isabel runs to him, and hugs him.

Spenc. You are looking well and happy.

Isab. I am happy.

Spenc. I am glad of that, dear, and you have cause to be happy. Irving wrote to me a few days ago; he said, now, if I tell

you, you won't tell him, will you?

Isab. No, of course not.

Spenc. He said he was more in love than ever; and, really, I don't blame him. Your smile should make him wish he could bring you the moon.

Isab. How nicely you can flatter, father.

Spenc. I do not flatter, dear, I could not help seeing it; it is just like your mother's smile, when she is not ill.

Irma looks up.

Isab. I will go down to the cook and see to it, that you get some nice brown chops for lunch. I know how much more you will enjoy them at home and with us all around you, and I will be the best waitress who ever deigned serve you. She laughs and runs out.

Spenc. Irma, I have a pleasant surprise for you.

Irma. wearily: Some more stupid jewelry.

Spenc. No, not jewelry, I know you do not care for that; in fact, it is not something, it is someone.

Irma. Startled, surprised. Some one? Did you bring some one with you?

Spenc. Yes, I brought some one with me from Denver.

Irma. with suppressed agitation: From Denver? Then- then it must be Harold.

Spenc. Yes, it is Harold. Are you pleased?

Irma. Pleased, I pleased? Of course I am pleased. But why did he come?

Spenc. Because I went to Denver to bring him here. I always noticed how much faith you had in him; and since he left the treatment you have received from other physicians has in no way benefited you. I wrote to him asking him to come, but he always put me off with some excuse or other; I then made up my mind to go and bring him here, and he is here.

Irma. You told me you were going on business.

Spenc. And is not your health of more value to me than business?

I told you that because I know you would have called it **14**

extravagance, useless and all sorts of things. I have done it and feel better for it.

Irma. And is he here now?

Spenc. Yes, I left him in the drawingroom; I was afraid the surprise would be too much for you. Shall I bring him in here?

Irma. trembling with excitement: Yes, yes, of course.

Spenc. I can see you are glad he is here. Well, faith is a medicine in itself, but let it be faith or his powders, I don't care which, as long as he gets you well. I will bring him in. He leaves. As soon as door closes Irma gives full vent to her feelings.

Irma. Harold here. In this very house; no, it can not be, it is only a delusion fostered by my poor brain. An illusion, Oh, how my heart yearns for it. Yes, yes, he is here, I hear his voice, Harold's voice. He is here. She runs to glass and fixes her hair. No, no, he must not see me like this; he shall never know that I have always loved him. Now, now let him come. I am calm, I am calm.

Enter Spencer and Harold;

Irma. goes to meet him: I- I am so glad to see you after all these years.

Har. I am more than glad to see you.

Irma. tries to smile: You are not much changed, except for a few gray hair.

Har. Considering what Edward told me that you have been ill most of the time you look remarkably well.

Spenc. I think Irma looks better when I am not at home.

Har. laughing, Why don't you stay away then?

Spenc. Oh, no; I am willing to do most anything in the world for her, but not that. He laughs.

Isab. comes in all in a flutter: Is it really true? Is Dr Dennison here.

Har. Since I am nowhere else I must be here.

I cool

Isabel runs over to him; he reaches out both hands to her.

Har. I am very glad to see you, Isabel; I was going to say little one, but I changed my mind. How you have grown, and so like your mother. You look just as she did, when your age.

Isab. I can't help it, I must kiss you; I'd die if I did not.

She kisses him.

Har. I hope Irving won't hear of this.

Isab. Who told you, father?

He nods his head. Enter Jack; goes over and greets his father

Jack. I am glad you are home again; when did you get in?

Spen. About half an hour ago.

Jack looks at Harold; they all seem amused at his bewildered look.

Jack. I believe I have seen the gentleman before, or dreamt about him, or, why, he looks like Dr Dennison!

Har. shakes hands with him: You have a wonderful memory, my boy, I am Dr Dennison.

Irma. How he did spoil you. Do you remember?

Jack. Indeed I do; and I remember how Isabel and I used to pray for your return, and how we gave up praying in despair.

Har. I think it was best I did not return, for you certainly look as if you had benefitted by my not being here to spoil you. They all laugh. Irma's laugh winds up in a short, hacking cough. Harold looks at her searchingly.

Spen. to Irma: Did you see the doctor as you promised you would.

Irma. No, I did not think I needed one; or perhaps I am like the baby who is always falling, we get used to it, and after a while we feel no pain. Well, now the doctor is here, she goes over to Harold, you may write as many prescriptions as as you please, but please do not say: don't eat this, or do eat only that; for really my appetite does not fail me.

Har. smiles; to Spencer: Is there any other room in the house that is warmer and lighter than this one?

Spenc. Yes, Irma always insists on having plenty of fresh air; that is why this room is always so cold; as for sun, this room has the sun in the afternoon. Isabel's room has plenty of both heat and sun.

Harold. We will then go to work at once. I know how anxious you are to hear what I can do for Irma; so, if you are ready, Irma, we will soon find out, how much good news we can bring your husband and your children.

Irma. I am ready; but remember, you must not interfere with my appetite.

Irma, Spencer and Harold leave.

Isab. Isn't he lovely Jack?

Jack. The dear fellow! He does bring back sweet recollections of when we were children.

Isab. I can just see you swinging on his knee.

Jack. Oh no, you can't. I would not attempt it; it might hurt him. They laugh. Jack goes to door.

Isab. Where are you going?

Jack. I promised Martin to attend a whist at his house this evening. I want to phone him and beg to be excused.

He turns to leave. Irving enters, and Jack walks into him.

Irv. You seem to be in a great hurry.

Jack. Yes, I am; Isabel will tell you all about it, and more.

He laughs and leaves.

Isab. kisses Irving: I am so happy, I could almost hug you to death

Irv. I have no objections to your being happy like this. Be happy some more, won't you please?

Isab. But you have not asked me what it's all about?

Irv. Don't want to know, as long as you are happy, and I get the most of your happiness.

Isab. But you must know, even if you do not want to. Now guess, won't you? What is it?

Irv. How am I to guess? Oh yes, I know! An increase in your pet cat family!

Isab. How stupid you are.

Irv. There you are! I told you I did not care to know; and because I am poor at guessing, I am called stupid.

Isab. I did not mean it, dear; I am so excited, I don't know what I am saying or doing; but I shan't ask you to guess again, for you really could't, not in a thousand years. Do you remember me telling you about Dr Dennison?

Irv. Ask me rather: could I ever forget, when he was served to me for breakfast, lunch and dinner, until I could scarcely digest him any more!

Isab. Well, he is here now.

Irv. He is here, is he? At last I will stand face to face with the man, who dared kiss you so much.

Isab. Why, who told you?

Irv. You did; did you not tell me you could not fall asleep, until that Dr Dennison had kissed you good night?

Isab. laughing, How foolish; I was only a child then.

Irv. Yes, but some diseases last a lifetime. I shall see to it, that this one does not. They laugh.

Isab. Oh by the way, my picture is almost finished; come, tell me what you think of it.

Irv. All right; I am going to find as many faults as I can, just to tease you.

They leave, laughing. Enter Spencer and Harold.

Spenc. Harold, I was waiting to hear you say something, but you do not seem very anxious; I am afraid that is a bad sign, for if you had something encouraging to tell me, you would not keep me in suspense; but whatever it is, Harold, do not deceive me. I am prepared to hear anything you will tell me.

Har. Yes, you look prepared, and you are about as calm as a sheep watching it's mate being shorn. You are trembling from head to foot; Come now, sit down, and you shall have my candid opinion. He hands Spencer chair, and sits down opposite him. Before I start to tell you I want to ask you a question.

Irma. parts draperies slightly, and looks in: I will never hear the truth, unless I hear it this way.

Har. Edward, suppose you were indebted today for all you own in this world; the loan had matured. What would you do?

Spenc. That is a strange question. What does it mean?

Har. Never mind what it means; I shall tell you soon enough. Now, tell me, what would you do?

Spenc. You need hardly ask that, Harold; you know I would pay my debt to the last dollar.

Har. You are in debt, Edward, in debt to your Maker; you have ~~not~~ borrowed, and you must return. Your wife was only loaned to you, not given to you forever. None of us can live forever. I will admit the time was short, but you can not ask for an extension of time; your Creator can not be questioned, for He knows best.

Spenc. dazed: Then there is no hope?

Har. None.

Irma drops draperies and disappears.

Spenc. My God, I can't give her up!

Har. It will not be as ^{my} hard for you when Death parts you from Irma as it was for ^{me} when another man parted me from the one I love. Edward; it is not the physician speaking to you, it is your old and trusted friend. I need not tell you how I feel with you and for you; but it can not be helped. You must face it, and face it bravely; not fall all in a heap, as you do. Be a man; you would not have Irma suspect, would you?

Spenc. My God, no.

Har. You must then listen to me, and obey my orders. You have lost your head, I have been schooled not to lose mine. I need not tell you that you have been the best of husbands, that you have made your wife as happy as your heart and labor would allow. If you would continue to make her happy to the last you must not change now; you can not appear before her as you look. Go to your room; I will tell her you have been called

away on some important business. I will detain her as long as I can, and that will give you the opportunity to collect yourself. Do not forget, your sorrow must not be seen, and don't let Irma see you, till you are yourself again.

Spenc. You are right, Harold. I will go to my room; I could not look happy tonight, no matter how hard I tried. The wound is so fresh, it smarts so acutely. You may tell Irma that Thomas sent for me. She knows he always keeps me out pretty late.

He rises slowly and leaves.

Har. Poor fellow. He rests his head on hand, and is lost in thought. Irma enters, stops back of Harold's chair and rests her hand on his shoulder. She tries to suppress her excitement.

Irma. Harold. Fifteen years ago you came to say good bye to me; you were going away from the woman you loved; still, you had hope that some day you would see her, would speak to her. Today, the one you love knows she is going away forever, never to see you again.

Har. turns round: Irma, what does all this mean, and why do you look at me in so strange a manner?

Irma. You are right. This look of truth is strange; I dared not be truthful before; but now, now everything is different. Surely, it is no sin to speak the truth before death? Harold startles. You see I know. I heard it from your own lips, just as I heard you say: the woman I love is a wife and a mother. Did you think I did not know that I was that woman?

Har. Irma!

Irma. And it was the longing to tell you that I loved you since I knew what love meant that brings me to an early grave.

Har. in whose features joy and despair are alternately depicted: Irma, are you losing your senses, or do I misunderstand you? You love me, me?

Irma. Can't you see, dear; do you not read it in my eyes? They are telling the truth at last.

Harold looks at her, and is tempted to take her in his arms.

Irma looks up at him.

Irma. I am not sorry I am going to die, for it is Death that brought you nearer to me. Harold makes an attempt at caressing her, but checks himself and releases her.

Har. Irma, you have deceived your husband; he is one of the best of men. Why did you marry him, if you had no love to give him?

Irma. Because I did not know you loved me; I did not know of it until the day you left for Denver. And then, I was young, I ~~was~~ wished to show you, I could live without you, and I believed, as my mother said, that I would learn to love him. He is so noble! But it was not to be; I could not love him, it was hard for me even to respect him. In the dreams of my lost love I could see in him only the man who appeared in time to cause us unhappiness. Oh, Harold, believe me when I say that Death is sweeter than a life with an unloved husband. You have suffered, I know, but you did not lead the life of deceit, of lies as I have done. You had no one at your heels, who with love and kindness was wearying your life away. I was not surprised to hear you say, there is no hope for me. Did I not know, that twenty years of such a life as mine was even more than I could expect?

Har. My poor Irma! And this was your life, while I believed you happy? If I had only known! When you realized your mistake, why did you not then tell him the truth?

Irma. Why? because until my first child was born I believed I could forget you, and learn to love him; then, when she was born I felt I was happy with her. I loved her so! As time wore on, I began to realize that the other love would always be lacking in my heart; but it was then too late. I could not retrace the step I had taken after my daughter began to say the word Father. It is of no use, I said to myself about as often as I said my nightly prayers, ~~as~~ I must sleep in the bed I have

made for myself. It was a hard bed, dear, so hard, that some times my tired soul would cry out in anguish. In the midst of my agony I would hear the patter of tiny, little feet come towards me; I would feel two little arms clasp around my neck. Ah, that was like balm for my aching wounds; but even balm will not relieve us of all the pain. The baby would run off again, perhaps to bed, and in its place would come a husband, who would almost smother me with kindness. Oh, what torture that was to me. He would ask me to smile, to kiss him, to sing for him, and to say I love him. I have done all this for twenty years; I have lived in two worlds. I have lived two lives, but now, now thank God, it is all over. I have but a short time to live, but that short time will be in one world.

Har. Irma, my love; There are a thousand questions on my lips, which I dare not utter; but one I cannot resist, I must say it. What do you mean when you say you will live in one world?

Irma. Can you not understand me, do I not speak plainly? I have lived in two worlds until a moment ago. From now until death I will live in one only, and, surely, you will understand from what I have just told you that I will not go back to that world where my life has been wrecked.

Har. Then you mean to—, oh, no, I dare not think of it! Irma, for you I left my mother, who died of a broken heart; for you I would willingly die a death of torture, but I beg of you, do not tempt me. I love you better than you will ever know, but this can not be, it must not be.

Irma. Then I have been mistaken; I am sorry I confessed to you, for your last words teach me that you do not love me, as I believed you did. Oh, fate, fate; how cruel you are! Why do you torture me so? She weeps.

Har. I will not deny, dear, that your life, and mine, has been one of torture; but now, now let us console ourselves with

the thought, that we understand each other. Let us reconcile ourselves to the thought, that though we were parted here on earth, we will belong to each other in Heaven. We have both chosen the wrong path, and it is too late now to turn back. I can not, will not take you from your pedestal of holiness, and drag you down to the very dust. I can not take you from your home, where you have reigned, a queen, and most of all, I will not take you from your children, who love you and need you.

Irma. You are right, Harold; all you have said is true, but tell me, has the pedestal, upon which I have stood for so many years, given me one moment of happiness; and does the home where I have been queen deserve credit for the life I have led? Of what use is it to be even a real queen, when the crown is one of thorns, thorns steeped in poison? Such was my life. I had all any queen could ask for, but did I enjoy it; did it give me one moment of which I could say I enjoyed? No. The poison in that crown worked slowly but surely, until now there is only a shadow left of her, who once was queen; and even that will disappear. Oh, Harold, to me my married life has been a huge stage, and I was the leading actress; but even an actress can not play her part, when her heart is full of sorrow; and if she must, then she is glad to get it over with as quickly as possible, and seek rest for her tired soul. So it is with me; I am not sorry I am going to die, for then I will not hear the endearing names, that have been the torture of my life. No, a thousand times no; I have lived a life of lies all these years, but I will do it no more. I will not die in his arms, and give him a last kiss, a false kiss. I will not have him at my death bed, weeping and breaking his heart over a woman, who never loved him. Can't you see, it is worse for me now than ever? I must go away; I cannot, will not stay here.

She weeps. Harold takes her in his arms.

Har. If you will not stay here, where will you go?

Irma. Anywhere; but before I go, I will tell him the truth. It is late in life, but I will then die in peace.

Har. You are then determined to do this?

Irma. Yes.

Har. But you are ill, you can't go alone.

Irma. I can do no more than die, and a few days more or less will not matter.

Har. aside: No, not alone; not while I live.

Har. You shall not go alone; I will go with you.

Drama. Do you mean that?

Har. I do. I will take you where ever you want to go, and if your happiness rests with me, you shall be happy until death.

Irma. At last! I have waited many years for this, and waiting has—well, I will not complain. I am repaid for all my sufferings, I will die content in the arms of the man I love, and my last look will be one of truth. Every word I will say to you will not be as if forced, and the sound of your footstep will not be like the bells, tolling death, death.

Har. How you must have suffered; but you shall suffer no more. Now, dear, we must part for a little while; I have much to see to before we start. Tell me, when do you wish to go?

Irma. I do not care to see Edward before I go; I will write it all to him. It will be easier for me.

Har. We must start before seven tonight. My carriage will be waiting for you. I do not think it will cause suspicion if we are seen leaving the house together, they all know we have been out without Edward, when he was busy. Now, my love, if in ~~the~~ my absence you should want to change your mind, if you should decide to remain, do not hesitate for my sake. Think only of yourself, dear, I can bear many disappointments, I am accustomed to them. He kisses her and leaves.

Irma. How sweet are the moments spent with the one we love! I can picture myself sitting and waiting for him to return from his

patients; every moment of his absence will seem a year to me. How different all will be; but it will not last long. But while it lasts it will sweeten the short time left me of life. I shall die in his arms, in Harold's arms. If I only had a little more courage; if I were not such a coward. I feel as if some one was listening to every word I say, as if my thoughts were laid bare to anybody. This feeling, I must shake it off. I have work to do. What shall I do first? Yes, yes, the confession to him. No, I can not do that. I will write to Isabel. She is in love with Irving, she will understand. Ah, Isabel, my darling, I can hear you sob when you read it, but you will not sob long; you will have your love to comfort you, while I, I will have mine only a short time. And Jack, Jack, my boy; I have lived for you, and now I am going away from you. How stupid I am; One would think he was a baby. Of course, he will feel sad for a little while, and then—. I must write that letter my darling children. I am about to--- Oh my God, I can not, I can not write it.

She drops her head on arm weeping.

Curtain.

Drawing room in Spencer's house.

Jack. anxiously looking out through door leading to balcony:
I think Theresa will have to help me find her. I must see her before she sees father. He rings bell, then sits down deep in thought. How I wish I were better at guessing. I am not an inquisitive fellow, but I must confess, I would like to know, what has gone wrong. Everything in the house seems upside & down.

Enter Theresa.

Ther. Did you ring, Sir?

Jack. Yes, I wanted to ask whether you have seen Miss Isabel the last half hour.

Ther. No, Sir. I haven't seen her, but I know where to find her, if you wish.

Jack. Well, I have been hunting all over the house, and can not find her.

Ther. It isn't very likely you would, for no one in the house would dream of that little nook, unless they had a sweetheart.

Jack. Then, how do you know?

Ther. Well, now, Mr Jack, you need not insinuate, for I am not in love; only, Miss Isabel hides nothing from me. You know, it was I, who put the first dress on her little body.

Jack. I see; no doubt Isabel can trust you.

Ther. Indeed she can, Sir. She is all the world to me, and she knows it.

Jack. Very well; I wish to see Miss Isabel alone, and I do not want Mr Montrose to suspect I am calling her. Can you arrange that for me?

Ther. Leave it to me, Sir; I will send her to you.

Jack. Very good; but please hurry. Theresa leaves.

Jack. I wonder what it all means. Father is in bed with cold compresses on the head; mother is in her room writing and weeping and does not know father is in. Dr Dennison left the house this morning, and has not returned. I can't understand it.

Enter Isabel.

Isab. Do you want to see me, Jack?

Jack. Yes; where have you been hiding?

Isab. That would be telling; and the less you men know the better for us women.

Jack. Do you never get tired?

Isab. No, and I hope I never shall.

Jack. I Isabel, let's be in earnest for a few moments, I have something to tell you.

Isab. I am all attention.

Jack. Have you seen father this evening?

Isab. No. Theresa told me that Mr Thomas had called him away on important business.

Jack. That is not true. I just came from his room. I happened to pass his door as James was going in with some ice. I became alarmed and insisted on going in, and he then told me he had been in his room ever since Dr Dennison left; but he begged me not to tell mother. You know, she is not strong enough to bear much trouble. Isabel walks to door. Where are you going?

Isab. To father, of course.

Jack. First of all, he is not in his own room. He did not want mother to suspect so he took James' room, and you can't go in there. Number two is, I want you to keep mother down stairs as long as you can.

Isab. I hope it is nothing serious?

Jack. I don't believe he is ill; I think he is worried about something.

Isab. Dr Dennison did not discourage him about mother's health?

Jack. I don't know if that is the cause. I thought father was prepared for the worst.

Isab. Jack! You don't mean mother is as ill as that?

Jack. aside: Now I put my foot in it. to Isabel: Oh no, I don't mean just that; I mean, I mean, oh, I say, Isabel, I've almost forgotten; I must see Irving before you go to theatre. I have something important to tell him.

Isab. Very well, then; come along.

Jack. But it is a secret, I must see him alone.

Isab. You may as well tell him before me, for he will tell me, if you don't.

Jack. No, he won't. I am going to tell him something that would shock you to hear; (aside) she will stay away now.

Isab. If your secret ^{is} of such a nature I certainly do not care to hear it. Come, I will show you where to find him; you could never guess. They laugh.

Jack. aside: It worked like a charm. They leave.

Enter Irma, pale and trembling, with letter in hand.

Irma. I have finished it at last. It will ^{be} a miracle if they will be able to read, my hand trembled so. I am not strong enough to go through this, I know I will collapse. If Harold were only here, if he would only give me something to straighten my nerves. I am so weak. My God, suppose my strength ^{does} give out so that I must remain here. What would I do? Surely, I would be compelled to tell him the truth; I could not look in his face as I did before I confessed to Harold. I could not do that, I could not see the look of anguish on his face, knowing I love another and have confessed it. No, no, that must not be; it shall not be. I must go. If I were not such a coward, it would not be so hard. Why do I tremble so? I am not going out in the cold world alone; I will have Harold to protect me, but, but, my children, I will not have my children I may never see them again. Oh, Harold, I can not, I can not.

Her glance falls on husband's picture; she shrinks from it.

Don't look at me like that, Edward. It is true, I never loved you, but you were not to blame; I deceived you. As long as I kept my secret I could at least look into your eyes but now, I can not; your very image seems to stare at me, and say: you no longer belong to me. And it is true; I no longer belong to you, since I have confessed I love another. I can not stay, I must go away; I have courage and will go though death strikes me between the door and the carriage.

The letter is written; I must put it in Isabel's room. Yes, and near Irving's picture with a lighted candle beside it, it will surely be seen by her. It must be done; there is no other way. She goes to door, hesitates, and then enters.

Isab. What a fool I am; I stood watching mother's room for half an hour so I might see her when she comes out; but then Irving called me. I was away only a moment, and now I have missed her and she will find out father is ill. Jack will never forgive me, and I can't forgive myself. Perhaps she went to my room. She goes to door, and comes face to face with Irma.

Isab. Why, mother; what has happened? You look so frightened.

Irma. tries to smile and look calm: Nothing, my dear. I went to your room, I had something to say to you, to you alone. I was thinking, and as I looked up, I saw a shadow, my own shadow, against the wall, and that frightened me so, I could scarcely breathe. She tries to laugh. I know I should be ashamed of myself; but I can't help it, dear.

Isab. leads her mother to chair: You are still trembling; how could you let such a trifle upset you so. She puts her arms around her mother, and kisses her tenderly. Irma shrinks from her touch. Now, mother, if you are not composed, I shan't go to theatre with Irving. I will stay and take care of you.

Irma. You must go, dear; you know, I never like you to stay at home when you can be out enjoying yourself; but before you go, I want to speak to you.

Isab. Are you sure you can do so, without taxing your nerves even more?

Irma. Yes, what I will say to you will be a great relief to me; it will help make my burden easier.

Isab. How strangely you speak, mother.

Irma. Yes, it may be strange to you, but to me, well, never mind that, dear; I will come straight to the point. Isabel, I am not very strong, I feel I am fading quickly, and I - I may be called away before you are married.

Isab. Don't, mother, please don't say that to me, I can't bear it.

Irma. You do not know what it means to a mother to know her child

is happy before she goes. I have often asked myself the question does she really love him, or will she marry him because her parents have chosen him for her.

Isab. If that troubles you, mother, then you may be assured; I do not marry him because you have chosen him, but because I love him.

Irma. Thank God for that; you will be happy with him, dear. Whatever sorrow your future life may bring to you will be brightened by him, if you love him. No matter how sick you may be at heart, the sight of the man you love will be the medicine to cure. Isabel, do not weep for me, when I am gone; be a brave girl. Say to yourself: she suffered, she is happy where she is.

Isab. Oh, mother, how you frighten me. Did that shadow play so badly on your nerves? You must go out in the fresh air. Takes wrap and puts around Irma. Go out on the balcony for a little while or, if you wish, go into the garden.

Irma. That is your wrap, dear; I laid it ready for you to go to the theatre.

Isab. It doesn't matter, you will in again before I go.

Irma. Perhaps not; you know I love fresh air. When once I go out, I like to stay as long as possible.

Isab. I will get one of your wraps for you then. She leaves.

Irma. She is going to get me a wrap. How little she dreams when she will put it about me, that she is putting a shroud on me, for she will never see me again alive. Oh my God, my brain is on fire; if I do not go at once I will be tempted, no, I will not be tempted. Irving will take care of her, and Jack, my boy, well, I am not immortal, and they will have to bear it, when I am dead.

Enter Isabel.

Isab. Here is your own wrap; I brought the warm one, so you may stay as long as you please. Irma hesitates. Come, put it on; shall I go with you?

Irma. No, no; I - I would rather be alone. I always go alone, and Irving will soon be ready. He does not like to wait; no man does.

Isabel helps her; Irma shrinks from her, walks a few steps, then turns round.

Irma. Poor child, how I must have frightened you. You are so pale. She kisses her. I am feeling much better, dear; I hope you will enjoy the play.

Isab. Thank you; and I hope to find you in better spirits, when I return.

Irma suppresses a sob, walks slowly out on balcony and disappears.

Isab. I am sure Dr Dennison has told her something to frighten her. She is so changed since he came; and yet, I can not believe he would do so willingly. She is worried about her health, and I fear she thinks she is going to die, for she looked at me so strangely. Poor mother. Irma comes back on balcony, sees Isabel has her back turned, steps over lightly, kisses her hair, then, with great emotion, leaves again unnoticed by Isabel.

Isab. I, too, fear mother's days are numbered. I did not think so until today; death is almost stamped on her face. I wish Irving would not insist on my going tonight, I am not in the humor. She walks towards balcony and looks out. I don't know what has come over me, I feel as if I could cry for an hour.

Enter Jack with a letter crumpled in his hand; he is pale and agitated; goes over and throws letter in fire.

Isabel. Jack, are you ill?

Jack. hesitating: No, I went to your room with a message from Irving. I, - I thought you were there.

Isab. Irving? Has anything happened to Irving?

Jack. No, he is all right; he asked me to tell you his tardiness is due to the conversation we had. He will be ready directly.

Isab. Jack, something has happened; tell me, dear, what it is, won't you?

Jack. I have just received a letter.

Isab. From whom?

Jack. From- from our- I mean from my dearest friend on earth.
He goes over to her, and puts his head on her shoulder.

Isab. What did he write that could cause you such pain?

Jack. His mother wrote to me, that he is gone, gone, Isabel, forever.

Isab. Did you love him so much?

Jack. Don't ask me that, Isabel, I could never tell what she, I mean, what he was to me.

Isab. Was he one of your college friends?

Jack. A friend that can never be replaced.

Isab. I am so sorry for you, Jack; but you must not give way like that. We all can not live to be old.

Enter Irving ready for theatre.

Irv. What's up; you both look as you had seen a corpse.

Isab. We have not seen one, but we just heard of one. A very dear friend of Jack's has died suddenly.

Irv. I am sorry, Jack, I know what it means to lose a friend. I have suffered that pain myself. (to Isabel.) Shall we go?

Isab. Suppose we remain at home to-night, it would be more pleasant for Jack.

Jack. No, no; you must go. Really, I prefer being alone to-night. I think a little nap on this very couch will bring me around all right. Do, please, go; I want to be alone.

Irv. Have your way, old chap. Come, Isabel, we will start. We are not very late.

Isab. If you insist, Jack, we will go. Why don't you go to your room, and make yourself comfortable?

Jack. I don't want to sleep very long, just a nap; perhaps I will feel better after it. I will be up long before you get home, and we shall then have some lunch together.

Isab. That is good; and we will come right back after the theatre. They move towards door. Isabel turns back. Oh, Jack, if you see mother before she goes to her room, tell her not to lay awake till I return, as she always does. She seemed so very

nervous this evening; she needs all the rest she can get.

Jack. trembling: I will not see her, Isabel.

Isab. You won't see her? Why, mother very often goes to her room this way.

Jack. Yes, but- but I will be asleep, and she won't wake me, you know.

Isab. You are right, I never thought of that. Good bye for a while, go right to sleep.

Irv. Yes, and dream something pleasant, something about, you know. He laughs. They leave.

Jack. I could not tell her now, I did not have the courage. Mother, dear mother, what have you done! You have broken the heart of a good husband, a loving father, and you have wrecked the lives of your children. What shall I do; how shall I act? The letter meant for my dear sister's eyes has fallen in my hands, and so I have been chosen to break the news to her and to- to father. How can I do it, when I have not the courage. He runs to table, and takes up decanter of whiskey. You, you shall help me. I have heard it said you give strength and courage. I will try you. He drinks, fills glass again and drinks, then fills glass again and drinks. He then rings bell. Enter butler.

Jack. If any one calls this evening we are not at home. You may put out the lights, Peter; I am going to rest here on this couch, I want to take a nap.

Peter. Begging your pardon, Sir, you look so tired, why not go to your own room?

Jack. I want to speak to Miss Isabel, when she returns. If you see her when she comes in, tell her to wake me if I am asleep. I want to speak to her.

Peter. I will tell her, Sir. aside: He looks as if he had been drinking. He puts out lights and leaves.

Jack. lays down on couch: I have often heard men talk about carrying a load; I don't see how they can do it. I feel as if the load were carrying me. I feel myself being carried to the North Pole.

He yawns and falls asleep.

A flash light reveals Irma in an intoxicated condition.

Irma. Where is Harold? I thought he was here. Looks around room, and stumbles over chair. I- I can't quite remember where he went when he left me. Fills up Jack's glass. Here is to Jack; I'll drink for him. He can't stand much, but I can. I can. She laughs. But where is Harold? She sits down. Only yesterday I was an honored wife, a loved mother, and today I am a drunken nobody; and all for him. Enter Harold. Oh, there you are. She staggers toward him and throws her arms around him.

He pushes her from him. Don't- don't push me so roughly, I am not accustomed to it. Edward was so gentle.

Har. Then go to Edward, and don't annoy me.

Irma. You don't mean that!

Har. I do. If you were not drunk, I would talk to you; but you can't understand me, while in that condition. He moves away from her.

Irma. I did not drink to please myself. I drank for my boy; he could not stand it, so I drank for him.

Har. Well, I sincerely wish you would sober up and go home, go back home. You are not such a bargain as I thought you were. Sick and squeeling women have no business away from their husband and children.

Irma. I am not sober, but I am sober ~~en~~ enough to understand you now. I see, I see, you are tired of me, stolen sweets are not sweet long; only in the beginning, and then they lose taste and flavor. You wish to rid yourself of me; but you won't do that, you can't do it. I can not go back to him, I left him of my own free will for you. You can't ask him to take me back.

Har. I don't intend to ask; you will go back yourself. You are his property, not mine.

Irma. You did not say that yesterday; you told me then you would ~~make~~ make me happy till I die.

Har. Entirely too long a time to wait for; really, I have't the patience.

Irma. runs over to him: Harold, you are going too far. I am no longer a weak defenceless woman; I am strong again, at least strong enough to avenge myself.

Har. laughing: You could not hurt a fly.

Irma. And you take advantage of that fact. Take care, don't drive me too far. You know I have nothing to lose.

Har. So, you really have the audacity to threaten me. He laughs. You are a joke, Irma, you are a highball without the whiskey. He goes toward balcony, lights a cigar and puffs at it slowly he turns his back on Irma, and looks down from balcony. Irma runs to wall, jumps on chair, and takes down a small rusty dagger. She quickly runs back to Harold and stabs him. He ~~is~~ totters, and falls off balcony. Irma stands as paralyzed with dagger in hand.

Irma. I am a runaway wife, a wicked mother, and to add to my sins I am now a murderess. Oh, why did I kill him? but I could not help it; he drove ~~me~~ ^{god} me to it. What shall I do now? She ~~looks~~ ^{goes} to balcony and looks down. She shrieks: He is dead, and runs in again. I will never drink again, not even for my boy. She is tempted to look at Harold again; as she nears the balcony, she sees somebody looking at him. She is frightened. Some one is lifting him up; now they will look for me, I must hide somewhere. Where, where can I go, there are no corners here. No, there is no place here; I must leave by the other side of the balcony. I will try it; I must not be tracked, must not be suspected. I will go back to those who love me, I will ask their forgiveness on my knees. Yes, I must go. She moves noiselessly toward balcony and slips out. All becomes darkened again.

Jack. calls out in his sleep: I will hide you, mother, I will hide you. He awakes gradually, then sits up. Where is she, where did she go? He looks around, all is dark. My God, I have been dreaming, oh, this darkness is terrible. He gets up goes to wall, presses button and turns on lights. He looks

around. What a terrible dream I have had; and they say whiskey is man's friend when in trouble. Well, if such is the case I want no friends, I prefer to be a hermit. Why, I could have sworn I saw it all here, in this very room. I am thankful it was but a dream; but suppose such a thing were really to happen suppose he were to tire of her? Oh, I must not think of that; I have enough trouble now, and why borrow more. He sits down and gradually begins to smile. I drank the whiskey, and I dreamt she was drunk. Well I refuse to carry more loads. Isabel is heard saying good night to Irving.

- Isab. enters: You are awake, as you promised. I am glad, for I am so hungry. She pulls off gloves and throws off wrap.
- Jack. I want to say something to you before we eat; I would wait, but I fear father will come down any moment.
- Isab. Go ahead, Jack; but please say it quickly. I am so hungry. You asked me to come right home, so we had no chance to eat.
- Jack. aside: Hungry! If she but knew! loud: Come, sit down; but I must first tell you what a funny dream I had.
- Isab. Yes, yes, I am listening.
- Jack. Shortly after you left I made up my mind to sleep, and I was tempted to drink some whiskey.
- Isab. Jack!
- Jack. I drank it, and I did sleep and did dream. I dreamt I saw mother intoxicated.
- Isab. laughs: You saw her as you would have seen yourself had you been awake. That is funny.
- Jack. That is not all. I dreamt mother told me she did not love her husband. Isabel laughs. Funny, isn't it, Isabel.
- Isab. Well, I should say so. You must have had a real jag; how I should have liked to see you.
- Jack. The end of the dream was she went away with the man she loved.
- Isab. still laughing: Perhaps you dreamt with whom she went.
- Jack. I did. She went with Dr Dennison.
- Isab. I would be ashamed to confess I ~~was~~ was so intoxicated.

- Jack. I am not ashamed to confess that I was intoxicated, but I am ashamed to confess that what I dreamt is true.
- Isab. almost shrieks: Is what?
- Jack. Is true.
- Isab. Jack, take my advice: go back to bed and sleep until you are sober. She gets up, and goes to door.
- Jack. Where are you going?
- Isab. To kiss mother good night.
- Jack. You will not find her, Isabel.
- Isab. comes back slowly. What does all this mean? You must still be under the influence of liquor.
- Jack. No, Isabel; no, I am sober. Can't you see through it all? Don't you remember mother's actions this evening; don't you remember the letter I threw into the fire? It was not from a friend; it was not for him I wept, it was for her, for our mother. The letter was written by her to you; I went to your room in search of you. I saw a letter stuck in Irving's picture frame, and a candle burning alongside of it. I looked at it. It read: to my darling children. I opened it, and read, oh, Isabel, I can't say the words again; but what I just told you is true. Isabel is almost collapsing. I hear somebody coming; it must be father. Isabel, be brave for his sake. Spencer comes in, in dressing gown. Isabel goes to meet him.
- Isab. Did our loud talking awaken you, father?
- Spen. I was not asleep; I was awake, expecting to hear your mother enter her room, and not hearing her I became alarmed and went to her room, only to find her bed untouched. I then thought, perhaps she had fallen asleep down here.
- Isab. She- she is in my room; she was reading there and fell asleep, and I did not want to disturb her.
- Jack. aside: I will never believe another word she says.
- Spen. I was really frightened; I thought she had again been suddenly taken ill.
- Isab. Father, I am no longer a child; I know we will soon lose her.
- Spen. hangs his head: Yes, child; it is true, but I can't, I can't

face it.

Isab. You have much to be thankful for; you know you have done more than your duty, and you loved her better than you loved your very life. Knowing all this, I will dare put you to a test.

Spem. Why, child, what are you talking about?

Isab. Father, I said before I am no longer a child; I love, and know what it means to be loved. I would go to the end of the world for my love; I would die for him. I would forgive him if he left me in a foolish moment, and repented afterward.

Spem. Will you tell me what you mean, Isabel, before I go mad?

Isab. I mean, mother is not in my room.

Spem. Not in your room; then where is she?

Isab. She- she has gone away with Harold Dennison.

Spem. Gone away with Harold; what for?

Jack and Isabel look at each other. Spencer looks pleadingly at them.

Spem. My God, it all dawns upon me now. I know, I know now whom she loved all these years; and it was then from her he flew fifteen years ago! Oh, children, she has broken my heart; she has disgraced my name, and ruined both your lives. He sobs.

Isab. Yes, she has broken your noble heart, I cannot deny it; but she shall not disgrace your name, father, nor ruin our lives. I swear to you, she will come back, father; she will soon learn her foolish mistake. In the meantime no one need be any the wiser; we will say she has left for some quiet place, on account of her health. The world will believe it; she was always ill.

Spem. firmly: She is with him, who can make her happy; she shall stay with him.

Isab. But, father, you will not ruin my life; you know, Irving's mother is so proud, and he, he is the same. He might-- she hangs her head.

Spem. Isabel, you are right. He takes her in his arms. The sin of

the mother must not fall upon her child. Jack, my boy, come here. He embraces him. I have you both to live for. I will try hard to take the place of both.

Curtain.

Act 3.

Drawingroom in Dr Dennison's home in Denver.

As curtain rises little Jeanette is seen peeking in through door.

Jean. May I come in? She looks around, no one is there. Why, no one is in; I guess, I'll go in and wait. Comes in and sits down for a moment, then gets up suddenly. But I can't wait, mother is waiting for that curling tongue, and she told me to come back at once. Looks around again. It is so quiet here; it reminds me of a graveyard. I think I am going to make a noise. She goes over to piano and starts in banging. Irma's voice is heard: Harold, somebody is at the piano, will you come in with me? I am really nervous.

Harold is heard: You may rest assured it is not a burglar, burglars would not play the piano. He laughs.

Jean. They may take me for a burglar and shoot me. She runs to door and stumbles into Harold, who enters with Irma. They laugh.

Har. So, we caught the burglar; Well, we will hold her till she explains. They all laugh.

Jean. Yes, you may laugh, but I won't laugh when I get back, for mother told me to return in a minute. She expects particular company, some one I never got a chance to see; and now she has broken her curling iron. She can't curl her hair, and sent me to ask you---

Irma. For a curling tongue? Jeanette ^{node} shakes her head. I will get you one in a minute. She leaves.

Har. How is your arm, Jeanette?

Jean. Oh, it's doing fine.

Har. Vaccination is not so very bad after all? is it.

Jean. No, but next time you are in the humor to vaccinate, won't you please try it on somebody else? He laughs.

Irma. enters with curling iron. There, take this to your mother, tell her I am sorry it is not a very good one; it belongs to my maid. I have no use for it, my hair is almost too curly

as it is.

Jean. sighs, Yes, I have often heard mother say, she wished she had your hair. I must go now. Goes to door and turns back. May I come in in a little while and look at your pretty pictures?

Har. Yes, Jeanette; Mrs Dennison will be pleased to have you, while I am out making my morning calls.

Irma. Yes, dear, I will be glad to see you.

Jean. Thank you; and mother will be glad too, for she never likes me to see that important company. She runs out.

Irma. How old fashioned she is.

Har. Yes, but she makes good company while I am away; and then the child is spoiled, she has been ill most of her life. While her father lived she had but to command, and he would obey. The little one loves you very much, dear; I wish you would try and love her a little.

Irma. I am very fond of her, Harold, but when you say love her, I feel as though you did not know the true meaning of the word love, He embraces her and kisses her. Forgive me, dear, for what I just said; but you know, that in my heart there is only room for one love, for you.

Har. If you only would have said that twenty years ago. How much more would I have to be grateful for; how much less a villain I then would be.

Irma. Don't speak like that, Harold, it makes me nervous; why, that speech sounds as if you were sorry.

Har. No, dear, I am not sorry; you are with me now; but I am sorry I removed you from that nich of wifely purity, where you stood. Can't you see, darling, I have nothing to lose. I was a coward to take you from your home and children.

Irma. And you regret you took me with you?

Har. No; I hate myself for saying no, but I can't help it. I wish I had the willpower I always believed I had. If I had ten lives to give, I would gladly give them for you, but I must say this; I want to feel at least, that I have opened your

eyes, that I have shown you the right path.

Irma. What do you mean?

Har. I am just awakening from a sweet dream; I am awake now. I must have been mad to allow you to sacrifice your name, your honor, your children, and all for me. I had nothing to lose; I have no children to weep for me. Ah, Irma, I love you; and it is because I love you so, that I do not wish to see you fall. I want you to be as you were. I want to replace you on that pedestal of motherly devotion, where you belong.

Irma. You wish me to go back?

Har. ^{note} ~~shakes~~ ^{shakes} his head: Yes.

Irma. You brought me to the fountain, and now you refuse to let me drink!

Har. I did not realize the water that sparkles so bright might be poisoned, for I was intoxicated; but I am a little bit more sober now. I see that to drink from our fountain of love means disaster to an entire home. You have already absorbed some of the poison by merely looking at it. Perhaps there is yet a cure; perhaps he will forgive you. If he loves you, I am sure he will.

Irma. You think I do not understand you, Harold. You feel like a criminal, who has stolen a treasure, wishes to return it and will then starve. You want me to go back to him, to comfort him, to be all to him, while you, you will remain here all alone with no one to love, no one to comfort you, perhaps die of a broken heart. No, Harold, you argue in vain; I have come to stay. I love you, and I will never leave you till I die.

Har. God forgive me, but I must confess I am not sorry, that you do not take my advice; but remember, dearest, should you at any time wish to go back, go, and Heaven's blessings follow you, but don't consult me about it, dear, for you see what a coward I am. He kisses her.

Jean. looks in and coughs: May I come in?

Irma. Yes, dear, come in.

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Jean. runs to her and kisses her. Is the doctor going out?

Har. Yes, dear, I am going out now. You can have her all to yourself; that's what you want, I suppose?

She nods her head and laughs.

Irma. goes to Harold. Have you many calls to make this morning?

Har. Not very many. I don't think I will be out very long, and I am sure your company won't allow you to feel lonely.

He takes his hat and goes to door, presses Irma's hand and leaves. Irma looks after him till he is gone.

Jean. runs to her: I am so glad he is gone, ain't you?

Irma. smiles. Come, Jeanette; here is a book with some pretty pictures, I will show them to you.

Jean. Won't that be lovely. They sit down and open book. Oh, this lady looks so much like mother, don't you think so?

Irma. Your mother has lovelier hair.

Jean. I don't mean as mother looks in the daytime; I mean, as she looks at night, when her hair is off. Irma smiles. And the man here, doesn't he resemble the doctor?

Irma. Why, no, the doctor is much better looking.

Jean. Do you think the doctor is good looking?

Irma. Well, rather.

Jean. I don't think he is the least bit good looking ever since he vaccinated me. Irma laughs. Oh, look at this little boy, isn't he just too lovely for anything; just the kind of a sweetheart I should like to have some day.

Irma. You will have many baby-laugh and cries before then, my dear.

Jean. I should'nt mind being a baby, if I had some one to play with; I am so unfortunate, no one ever has any children, who lives around here. Why have you no children?

Irma. I have children, Jeanette, but the are not little ones.

Jean. Where do they live?

Irma. Oh, they are many, many miles from here.

Jean. Many miles from here; oh, I suppose you don't love them then the way mother loves me.

Irma. Of course I love them; but I could not take them with me where.

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ever I go.

Jean. Well, I suppose you love them just a little. You can't love them very much, for I heard mother say she would go nowhere, unless I was with her. Why, I don't know what I would do without my dear mother, especially when I am ill. It just seems as if the pain disappeared when she puts her hand on my forehead. The nurse can never take my mother's place.

Irma. restless and worried, gets up and begins to pace the floor. Don't, child, don't.

Jean. I am so sorry I have given you a headache; mother says I talk too much, and I guess she is right; but I won't annoy you any more. If you will let me take the book I'll go in and look at the pictures, while you take a powder and lie down, as mother does when she has a headache. Irma gives her book. I will send it back to you with Susan as soon as I have looked at all the pictures.

Irma. You may keep it; Dr Dennison brought it home for you.

Jean. Isn't he nice. You won't tell him what I said before?

Irma. No, no, I know you are fond of him.

Jean. And you won't tell mother I gave you a headache? Take a powder and you will feel better. Good bye. She leaves.

Irma. That child has set my nerves on edge; but, surely, she is not wrong. Are there any hands compared to a mother's when one is ill; what if Isabel or Jack were ill, and no mother's hand to soothe the fevered brow. Oh, dear, I wish that child were less old-fashioned, and did not speak so. She walks up and down nervously. Suppose Isabel were married; I could not follow her and her husband all over the world; and Jack, well, he never told me he was ill for fear it would worry me. Jack, my dear, dear, boy. She sighs. Enter servant with letter; Irma takes it. It is Isabel's handwriting, she almost screams, hysterically; her hand trembles, she can hardly open letter. She kisses it. How I have hungered for this. At last, at last; my darling I knew you would not forsake me. Oh, I have torn the page, but

it does not matter, I can read it. She turns pages, glances at them and exclaims: I don't love him. What does she mean? I must read from the beginning. Oh, why do I tremble so! Paces the floor, then sits down and reads:

My darling mother. My letter will be a great surprise to you, for you will now learn a secret, which I kept from you ever since my engagement. What can she mean? Do you remember when you asked me if I loved Irving, and I told you yes? Well, it was not so." It was not so; can it be possible she does not love him, and I believed her protected. My God, what have I done! I left my child to fight her own battle, and this is the result. Continues letter. "It was not so. I never loved him. I would have married him, for I knew both you and father had your heart set on it, and I always tried hard to please you, you know that, mother dear; but when you left and learned the cause, it was a lesson to me. Irma sobs. A lesson, not to marry the man I do not love. Surely, mother, you will be the last to blame me." True, true, I should be the last; oh, what have I done, what have I done." I will now tell you with whom I am in love, and whom I shall marry secretly next Tuesday; it must be in secret, for father will never consent, and I must confess that my choice will not meet with your approval either. But he loves me and has given me his promise never to touch a card again." Never touch a card again; what does she mean, who is the man? "You will be sure to know him, for he was mixed up in that little card gossip last year, and you said you knew his parents well. His name is: Howard Cameron."

Irma. gasping: Howard Cameron; that notorious gambler. No, no, she must mean another, and yet, she says he has promised to give up playing cards. My God, I can't read any more, I can't see, my eyes fail me. What is to be done. In less than a week she will be his wife. No, it can not be, it must not be; I must prevent it. I will not allow my child to marry a gambler, a thief, a man, who never did a good act in his life; and then, he is old enough to be her father. Isabel, what has come over

her, how can she love that man; she must be mad. But I must not blame her, she had no one to guide her. Oh, what shall I do? Shall I write to her and tell her what he is; and what if she does not take heed, and her blind love leads her to marry him in spite of my warning. What then? She may be married to him before I can get an answer. I must- I must go to her; I must go, I must save her. Throws herself on couch, weeping.

I can't, I can't leave him now. If I go I am sure I will never see him again. God, your punishment has been quick and sharp; You have placed me on a bed of thorns, and I have not the courage to set myself free. I have sacrificed so much for this short space of happiness; I have suffered so many years, yearning for my lost love, and now now, when I am here with him, when I turned my face from the entire world to be happy with him I must go back, back to face all those who will despise me back to the world that will laugh at me. How can I do it. She runs across room, and comes in contact with a mirror; she stops short, glances into mirror and gives a shrill laugh.

What on earth are you fighting for; a shadow, nothing but a shadow of the past. What is there left of me; nothing but a ghost of my former self. Is that the face of a woman, who has a month left to live! This letter is my death warrant; it has robbed me of the little I had to live for. My troubles are almost over, but Isabel, she has such a long life before her, and if she marries that man, her life is ruined forever. No, she shall not marry him; I will go, I will save her from that terrible fate, if life will only last me till I reach her. She goes over and kisses Harold's picture. Harold, your words of this morning have come true; how little you dreamt they would come true so soon. Perhaps you will say I did not love you as you thought I did, but I do love you better than you will ever know. Still, don't you see, dear, I love my child better than I love you. I can not help it; believe me, I can't oh, I can't, I would gladly die for you, but now, not now; I

must live until I have saved her; and then, then, will I ever be able to anything for you, love, or will it be too late? Help me, God, to leave this place; I will sacrifice even the last few moments of my life to save her, but help me, give me the strength, the courage. I have sinned, I know, but my child must not suffer for it. Courage, Strength, sustain me in this hour, when I need you the most! I must leave before he returns; one look at him will weaken all resolutions. Yes, it will be best for him and for me that I leave now, now, at once, without seeing him. This letter from Isabel, I will place it, where he must see it; he will understand. And now, I must not waste time. She goes to drawer, takes out money, puts it in posom, and rings for servant. Enter servant. Bring me my hat, my gloves and my grey coat; and put in a small handbag what you think I would need for a few days travel. Order the carriage and place the grip inside. That will be all. Servant leaves. That much is done, now courage for the rest. Oh, Isabel, you will never know how much I sacrifice for you, till you will have a daughter of your own. No, it is no sacrifice; it is but the most holy and unselfish of loves, the maternal love, put to a test, and it has won. But Harold, will he ever know; will he ever realize, no, he can not realize, he knows but one love, while I, I know of two, and for motherlove I must forget everything else. I tremble to think of it; how he will enter this very room and call: Irma, where are you, dear and then he will call the servants and ask them as many all and as many questions as he can in one breath; and then he will be here alone, all alone, and picture where I sat, when he saw me last. Enter servant with hat and coat. You may tell the doctor there is a letter of importance on the desk for him. Servant bows and leaves. Irma puts on hat and coat. Go, if you wish, from me, as you went from him. How soon those words proved true, and I will obey you, dear. She presses his coat to her lips. I hear his voice, he is here, what shall I do?

Har. enters. I have not been long, have I, dear? I see you are ready for a walk.

Irma. nods: Yes.

Har. I see the carriage at the door, are you going for a drive?

Irma. N- Yes.

Har. But not that way; you look ready to travel.

Irma. Yes, dear; but is it not becoming? I put it on, because you told me I look best in my travelling suit. I deserve a kiss for that, don't I? He takes her in his arms and kisses her; she sobs, then looks up at him. I cry because I am happy, I always do, I can't help it. I will not urge you to drive with me today, that will give you more time for your office calls, your patients need you so much. She kisses him again; he releases her, she moves to door. There is a letter for you on the desk, dear. She leaves.

He stands looking after her till she is gone, then goes to door, and puts his hand on portier for support.

Har. Gone; she is going back to him. It is all over; my dream is ended.

Curtain drops and rises again. He is seen reading the letter.

Curtain.

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Act 4.

Spencer's drawing room.

Isabel is writing letter to Irving, who is away on a business-trip; she is finishing letter as curtain rises.

Isab. Your very own sweetheart. Looks up. I think it was stupid of me to write to mother as I did; she will never believe that I do not love Irving. The very words "not love Irving" seem almost ridiculous. I am afraid my scheme has failed; she must suspect I did not write the truth, that I did it just to bring her back again.

Enter servant with letters; Isabelle takes them hurriedly and glances over them. Servant leaves.

Isab. None from mother. She opens one. From Irving.. Kisses it and puts it on the desk. Opens another. From Vivian. Opens the last one. From my dress maker. Oh, dear, I am so tired hoping, and watching and waiting.

Enter servant with telegram. Isabel runs to meet him.

Isab. You may go, Peter.

Peter. There may be an answer.

Isab. You are right. Wait, I will read it. Opens telegram and reads: I am awaiting Jack at the Savoy. Isabel is beside herself with joy. Well, Peter, why don't you answer the telegram?

Peter. I would, Miss Isabel, but you have not told me what to answer.

Isab. Answer it anyhow. I don't know what I am saying. Peter, mother will be here in an hour.

Peter. And it's glad I am to hear it.

Isab. Just say: Jack will be with you within the hour.

Peter. I will send it off at once. He leaves, and comes face to face with Mrs Goodrich.

Mrs G. My, but that butler of yours is in a hurry. Has anything gone wrong, can I be of any service?

Isab. Oh no, nothing is wrong. Aside: What shall I do now; I must get rid of her. I must see Jack.

Mrs G. Well, I am glad to see you getting along so nicely without

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your mother. Had she known how well you can manage without her I am sure she would have left long ago to take care of her health. Isabel is not listening; she looking through windows and doors in search of Jack. Don't you think so, Isabel?

Isab. Oh, what is she talking about. Of course, of course; it's always that way.

Mrs G. It's always that way; what way? I do believe you don't know a word of what I said.

Isab. I beg your pardon, Mrs Goodrich, I did not hear what you said, I was thinking.

Mrs G. goes over and puts hand under Isabel's chin and looks at her. You little vixen; I know you are in hot water over something, but you are hiding it from me. Come, you know I would do most anything to assist you. Won't you let me?

Isab. I would gladly, if it were necessary, but, really, it is nothing but a little affair of- of Jack's; and you don't care to be mixed up in boy's larks. Aside: I am inventing them by electricity.

Mrs G. No, I don't care to meddle with any affairs concerning men; they are so ungrateful. The more sympathy and kindness we show them the less we are appreciated; but with our own sex it is so different; we are such grateful creatures.

Isab. Yes, but it is so seldom we have anything to be grateful for.

Mrs G. That is insinuating we are seldom kind to one another.

Isab. Of course, that does not class you with the rest; you are always willing to give a helping hand.

Mrs G. Isabel, your parents should be very proud of you; and as for Irving he is winning a price.

Jack. enters, and goes over to Isabel. Did you send for me, Isabel?

Isab. N- yes, I want to tell you; oh, wait a moment, I'll tell you.

Mrs G. I see, you two want to be left alone; well, I shan't detain you. I just dropped in to hear something of your mother. I almost forgot to ask about her; is she doing well?

Isab. Yes, we expect her back in a few days.

Jack. aside. What is she talking about?

Mrs G. You really mean it? Well, it is too good to be true; she must have improved wonderfully, if she returns so soon.

Isab. I don't think so; I think she just made up her mind to come home, and she will come.

Jack. aside: She must be dreaming.

Mrs G. Just like Irma; she always did have her own way and always will. Let me know the moment she arrives, will you; it will be such a treat to see her again. Well, good bye, dear.

Jack. aside. I wish she would run.

Mrs G. I must be going now; I have't heard a word of the Stapletons in a week. I must go there at once. Good bye. She leaves. Isabel breaths a sigh of relief. Jack goes over to her.

Jack.... Is what you said to her true? Isabel hands him telegram. He reads it. What does this mean; how did it happen?

Isab. I can't tell you all now, it would take too long, for I answered her by telegram, that you will be there in one hour. but I will tell you my plot in as few words as possible: I wrote a letter to mother; I said I did not love Irving, but that I did love Howard Cameron, the notorious gambler. I wrote I would marry him secretly next Tuesday. I knew she would not permit it, would do all in her power to prevent it and she is here.

Jack. Isabel, you are the dearest, the- the- you are a brick.

Isab. Now, Jack, go to mother at once. You try to smooth the road for me, and I, I will stay here and clear the road for you and for her.

Jack. I understand. I am afraid you will find it a hard and rocky road with father. I prefer my task to yours. I'm off.

Isab. Tell father I would like to see him.

Jack. I'll tell him; but, I say, Isabel, you had better invent some more of those fairy tales for him, I think they will work. He leaves.

Isab. sits down. Jack is right; his task is easier than mine. I do not know how to begin. I can not make any excuses for

her; I know in my heart, that there is no excuse for her, except that she loves him, and if she really does love him, why does she come back? I surely can not tell him, it was a trick that brought her back.

Isabel is deep in thought; Spencer comes in and stands looking at her.

Spen. Jack told me you wished to speak to me; is it good news?

Isab. That- that depends. To Jack and to me the news brings the greatest joy in our lives; and to you, well, to you it is a test, I want to see.

Spen. I understand. Your mother wants to return, and you want my consent? Isabel nods. But, my darling, he takes her in his arms, I am surprised you do not shrink from such a task. You are no longer a baby; you love with all your young heart; place yourself in my position. Picture the man you have loved and trusted, oh, I can not say any more, you are her child, and I must not condemn a mother to her own flesh and blood.

Isab. Father, you have just asked me to place myself in your position; I will ask you to place yourself in her position. If you would have loved in vain, as she did, would you have suffered in silence for twenty years, would you have sacrificed yourself for your children ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ until your strength gave out so completely, that you no longer had the power and will to resist temptation? I will not deny it was wrong; I am not defending the act; but, place yourself again in her position; if you were ill, perhaps dying, would you expect to find the home that held your children locked for you?

Spen. Dying; but she is not dying, Isabel?

Isab. Who knows, perhaps she is; but, father, is it only the dying we should have mercy upon? It seems to me, that a kind deed to the dead or dying is like smoke from a lighted but unused cigar, it is wasted. I should think it is the living we should uphold. If the world would speak as kindly of the living as it does of the dead, perhaps there would be less cause for sighs

of regret. Father, I don't want you to regret; you know she will not be with us long. She weeps.

Spen. Isabel, your mother shall come back, if she wishes to, and I will try to have no cause to regret. He moves slowly to door, looks back at her and sighs. So much like her mother. Leaves.

Isab. Poor father, how he loves her; I hope she will try and love him a little, he needs her love so much. Oh, I must get ready, they will soon be here. She places all the cushions on the sofa, puts a small table nearby, and puts a bunch of violets on table. I think I will get her nice warm slippers for her, she will no doubt feel cold, she always does. If I only find them; but I will hunt for them till I do. She leaves.

Enter Irma and Jack. He places her on couch and removes her wraps.

Irma. Home again with my children.

Jack. Yes, mother, home, you are not sorry?

Irma. No, I am not sorry, but, well never mind that. Where is Isabel? What beautiful violets; Isabel has no doubt placed them there for me. She presses them to her lips.

Enter Isabel with slippers in her hand; she drops them on floor and runs over to her mother, and kisses her again and again.

Irma. My darling, how careworn you look.

Isab. How pale and tired you look. She fairly smothers her with the cushions; gets fur rug and covers her. You are so cold; mother here are your warm slippers. I was just hunting for them, when you came in.

Irma. Isabel, Jack has told me all; but I do not blame you, dear, you were right, and you have taught your mother a lesson. A lesson that will help me meet my God, for I have chosen duty to love.

Isab. Oh, do not speak of that now. Your hands are so cold. I will make you a cup of tea, just as you like it; I will prepare it myself. Jack will talk to you while I am gone. I won't be long. She kisses her and starts to leave, when

Irma. calls: Kiss me again, dear.

Isab. You will tire yourself by talking too much; you can tell us all about it in the morning. She leaves.

Irma. I have suffered to get here, but she is worth it. Jack, dear, come here, I want to speak to you. Jack goes over and kneels by couch.

Jack. You must not tire yourself, mother, you are not strong enough to exert yourself.

Irma. Jack, my boy, you are old enough to understand that it was not my strength but my willpower that brought me here. It was the hope of saving my child that kept soul and body together; but now, don't you see I am dying?

Jack. No, no, mother, you are not dying, you are only tired from the long journey; you will feel better in the morning.

Irma. In the morning; well, let us hope so, but I must say something to you now, now, while I still have the strength. Who knows what tomorrow morning will bring? Jack, my boy; I will not be here to advise you when your time will come to choose a wife, but remember these words: Don't be afraid to ask the girl you love to marry you, even if you be poor, for when a woman really loves she will not put her love on the scale against his money. She will know it is useless, for love will outweigh all gold. Don't stand and wait until your love is led to believe that you do not love her, for she will then marry another, just to show you, you are not the only man. You don't know, Jack, but women are queer creatures; they will often bite their nose to spite their face. They repent, but it is too late, yes, too late. Promise me, Jack, you will not forget this; will you?

Jack. I promise; but why say all this now, there will be plenty time tomorrow.

Irma. Hold my hands, so, dear.

Jack. aside: God, she is dying. Loud: You have not asked for father, do you not want to see him?

Irma. No, I would rather not. I have deceived him for twenty long years, and I will not deceive him now, for I know- I know I am dying. No, I do not wish to see that look of pity on his

face, I deserve none from him. Jack, can you hear me? My, my voice sounds so faint.

Jack. I hear you, mother.

Irma. Then take this message to Isabel. Tell her she will never know how much, oh, so much, I sacrificed to come to her, till she- till she is a mother. Ah, mother-love, how you ennoble, how you enshrine the soul. Jack, Jack, look, look how beautiful, see the little angel. Ah! Jack weeps.. Don't weep, Jack, for I am tired, oh, so tired. I want to sleep.

Jack. My mother, she is dying.

Irma. They say love like mine is sinful on earth, but in Heaven, in Heaven it is so different. Yes, love, I am coming; I am coming. She dies.

Jack kisses her, weeping, then gets up as he hears Isabel.

Isabel comes in with tray and tea.

Isab. Oh, she is asleep; No, I will not wake her, I will make some fresh tea for her later. Jack, do you feel cold, I do. I feel as if everything in the room had turned to ice. Jack, why do you look at me so strangely. She goes over to couch. Jack, she is so pale, she frightens me; shall I wake her?

Jack. puts his arms around Isabel. You, you can't wake her; she is in her eternal sleep.

Isabel drops on her knees; Jack kneels beside her.

Curtain.